DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 518 SP 032 882

AUTHOR Avila, Linda
TITLE Peer Coaching To Enhance the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education Teachers.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council of States on Inservice Education (15th, Orlando, FL, November 16-20, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education Programs; *Bilingual Teachers; Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); Inservice Teacher Education; *Language Teachers; *Peer Teaching; Program Effectiveness; Staff Development; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Tutoring

ABSTRACT

In an effort to deliver practical staff development opportunities to bilingual education teachers and build a support system for them, a peer coaching inservice workshop model was developed. Over a period of one school year, about 40 elementary bilingual and English-as-a-second-language teachers participated in a 6-session workshop series with a peer coaching component. Released time was given to the teachers for these sessions. The workshop format included time for the teachers to explore their latest cycle of peer coaching as a whole group, explaining practices they had observed their peers using which they considered worthy of dissemination to other bilingual education teachers. They also reflected orally and in writing on their own observing, coaching, and conferencing skills. In each segment of the workshop series, whole group presentations, role-playing, brainstorming, small group activities, independent activities, and group sharing of actual teaching strategies and lessons were used by the participants as instructional vehicles for the concepts to be mastered. Each workshop ended with a segment on principles and strategies to support the peer coaching component of the project. Written comments from teachers indicated that, for them, the most valuable component of this staff development program was the opportunity to observe and give feedback to one another. (JD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

# PEER COACHING TO ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

ED329518

presented by

Linda Avila, Ph. D.

Department of Educational Administration

Southwest Texas State University

San Marcos, Texas 78666-4616

(512)245-3756

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATES ON INSERVICE EDUCATION

NOVEMBER 16-20, 1990

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L Avila

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 032 882

## Pèer Coaching to Enhance the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education Teachers

Teachers designated to serve the bilingual and limited English proficient students in our public schools are often at-risk themselves. These teachers serve students who exhibit various language differences in addition to cultural diversity. Additionally, these teachers are generally isolated with few other peers in their immediate schools or districts who face similar challenges in designing instructional units for students in two or more languages. Often they spend extra time planning lessons and units which not only will be delivered in two or more languages but are also sensitive to wide-ranging cultural traditions and nuances brought to their classrooms by their students.

In an effort to deliver practical staff development opportunities to bilingual education teachers and, at the same time, to build a support system for them, the San Marcos C. I. S. D. developed "Peer Coaching Using the Effective Teaching Practices". This model was built upon the research on effective staff development activities (Sparks, 1983;Showers, Joyce, and Bennett, 1987) and was part of an overall district thrust to train all district teachers in research-based instructional practices as part of the district vision for instructional improvement. The staff development was

delivered over a period of one school year and involved about 40 elementary bilingual and English as a second language teachers.

## THE CHALLENGE

San Marcos is located between Austin and San Antonio, Texas and contains approximately 20,000 permanent residents, with another 20,000 students attending the local university. The school district itself serves 5,918 students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade, 60% of whom are Hispanic and 42% of whom are of lower socioeconomic status. The bilingual/English as a second language program serves 756 students who have been designated as limited English proficient, with 372 limited English proficient students in grades kindergarten through five. The test scores for these students on the statewide minimum academic skills assessment have historically been below the district norm. During the 1989-90 school year, the percentages of identified limited English proficient students mastering the three portions (reading, writing, and math) of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimal Skills varied from a high of 70% in math to a low of 29% in writing.

The district has begun a restructuring effort to address the needs of all of the students; part of this restructuring has been voluntary staff

development in effective teaching practices and strategies which is intended to reach all teachers over a period of years. Staff development thrusts also part of the overall restructuring plans include efforts in the areas of cooperative learning, mastery learning, whole language reading approaches, and student learning styles.

To offer the effective teaching practices training to all bilingual education teachers without waiting years until all have been able to access the voluntary program, the district bilingual staff decided to offer a separate avenue. All bilingual education teachers were asked to participate in a six-session workshop series with a peer coaching component. The design was originally created to deliver the same content as contained in the district's staff development project for all teachers but to capitalize on peer coaching (not part of the overall district staff development effort) and other features of effective staff development.

THE WORKSHOPS

The six-part workshop series began in mid-September of the 1990-91 school year; workshops were held twice a month. The bilingual teachers were divided into two groups of 20; twenty teachers attended three-hour sessions in the morning, and the other twenty came in the afternoon. After the third workshop, teachers who had been attending

morning sessions switched to afternoon schedules for the rest of the series and afternoon attendees changed to morning workshops. Because one of the common complaints of teachers concerning staff development revolves around time pressures, the district funded the hiring of substitute teachers to teach participants' classes on the days of the workshops. Each workshop was videotaped for individual viewing at a later date by teachers who were not able to attend that session.

Each three-hour session followed the same basic format. Except for the first session, each workshop began with approximately twenty minutes for teachers to explore their latest cycle of peer coaching as a whole group. They explained practices they had observed their peers use which they thought were worthy of dissemination to other bilingual education teachers; they reflected orally and in writing on their own observing, coaching, and conferencing skills; and they wrote anonymous suggestions for improvement of the project, including the workshops and the peer coaching episodes. Additionally, these debriefing sessions allowed teachers to bring up any concerns about the project and to seek additional information and clarification on concepts and skills already presented; often these concerns and questions arise only after teachers have had an opportunity to practice and apply in real teaching situations

the ideas presented.

The second component of each session involved presentations and activities centering around one concept from the Madeline Hunter model. The sessions were entitled:

-"I Believe in Me", focussing on motivation theory and research on teacher expectations as they impact student achievement;

-"Where Does the Time Go?", highlighting effective classroom and discipline management practices;

-"I Like the Way...", emphasizing reinforcement theory and classroom climate factors;

-"I Can't Seem to Recall", targeting retention research and theory;

-"But Why do I Need to Know This?", centering on transfer theory; and

-"How can I do all of This?", pulling all of the previous concepts together through a review of several teaching models, including Bloom's mastery learning model, cooperative learning models, and Hunter's seven step model.

In each of these segments, whole group presentations, role-playing, brainstorming, small group activities, independent activities, and group sharing of actual teaching strategies and lessons used by the participants

served as the instructional vehicles for the concepts to be mastered. To culminate each of these segments, bilingual education teachers observed videotapes of actual elementary teachers, took anecdotal notes on behaviors which demonstrated the effective teaching concepts presented that day, and discussed in small and large groups how the behaviors they had noted individually exemplified or failed to exemplify those concepts.

Each workshop ended with a segment on principles and strategies to support the peer coaching component of the project; these skills composed a strand that ran throughout the six workshops and were increased incrementally each time. Again large group presentations, demonstrations, role-playing, and small group activities were utilized. At least one of the following topic areas was addressed at each session: taking descriptive notes during observations, utilizing various observation instruments, providing factual behavioral descriptions of teaching episodes observed, giving constructive criticism, using effective communication skills, using reflective listening and other skills to encourage others to explain and justify instructional decisions, and examining and evaluating one's own behavior as a peer coach.

To close each session, pairs of peers were instructed to observe one another in classroom situations, focussing their observations on the area

of effective teaching practices just presented and practiced during that workshop.

## THE PEER COACHING PROCESS

Prior to the beginning of the project, a meeting of all participants was held to give an overview of the training project. Previous to this meeting, the elementary principals and assistant principals had been given a more extensive briefing of the entire project and of their roles in supporting it. All participants were asked to list for their principals their three choices of bilingual education teachers with which they would liked to be paired. At the four campuses involved, decisions were made differently on the pairings for the peer coaching component. At one campus, teachers were allowed to form their peer coaching pairs with no administrative guidance. The administrators at the other three campuses used the preferences of the participants in conjunction with information on the similarities of teaching schedules, similarities of planning times, grade levels taught, numbers of years of experience as a bilingual teacher, and compatability of teaching styles to make assignments of participants to peer coaching pairs. Participants understood that, except in cases of extreme differences of opinion that might arise, peers were to remain

paired throughout the life of the project (one academic year).

Time for observation and feedback is of the essence in peer coaching programs (Garmston, 1987). San Marcos C.I.S.D. addressed this need in several ways; bilingual education consultants and instructional aides were made available to cover the classes of pairs of peers to allow them time to observe and conference. Teachers used portions of their instructional planning periods to complete their peer observing and coaching activities. Peer pairs set their observation and conference times to meet their demanding schedules.

Each peer coaching cycle focussed peers on the concepts and principles presented in the latest workshop. In some instances, observation instruments were constructed to be used during those specific observations. At other times, participants were asked to utilize the method of anecdotal notetaking to record observation data.

Once each peer of a pair had observed the other, the two met to give one another feedback and to stimulate reflective thought about the lesson, strategies, and materials observed. The generation of alternatives in these conferences was emphasized as part of the training.

At the conclusion of the six workshop sessions and their accompanying peer coaching cycles, a steering committee of teachers who

had volunteered was formed to plan follow-up activities. Suggestions from project participants for follow-up activities included: continued peer coaching cycles, teacher study and discussion groups, additional workshops, custom-designed university courses to cover the concepts in more depth, individual viewing of additional videotapes of excellent bilingual teachers, the distribution of readings, and inclusion of regular classroom teachers in the peer coaching teams.

## THE RESULTS

Garmston (1987) outlined three types of peer coaching models, all of which have as one of their purposes the improvement of instruction. Instructional improvement is most often measured in terms of student achievement and learning outcomes. The impact of this particular bilingual education teacher development project in terms of student achievement is yet to be established, as the student learning outcomes need to be assessed longitudinally. The bilingual education programs in Texas measure their successes mainly in terms of the abilities of their students to exit the bilingual education support system and to achieve in regular classrooms commensurate with their English-dominant peers. Data on student success will need to be gathered throughout the next few

years.

Immediate formative feedback from participants was gathered formally throughout the project. Additionally, participant input to district bilingual education staff and school administrators seemed to positively support the project. Written comments received from teachers indicated that the most valuable component of the staff development program in their perceptions was the opportunity to observe and give feedback to one another. Examples of their comments included:

"We have been given the opportunity to share with and observe someone else. We can discuss through conferencing how we feel about our lessons and provide or receive ideas on how to become more successful as teachers."

"It has made me aware of the things I am doing right or wrong before the real evaluation comes around."

"I feel more comfortable with my peer observing me than an administrator. I get positive feedback."

"Peer coaching has been non-threatening and very positive."

"I have picked up new ideas and viewpoints that I didn't have before."

"The thing I have liked most about peer coaching is being able to watch someone else teach. I have picked up some good ideas. I have also

realized that I'm not the only one with certain problems."

Informal comments from the bilingual education teachers indicated that they feel their isolation has been breached and that they look forward to continued peer coaching episodes and monthly bilingual staff meetings to provide that networking and support needed by these teachers working with at-risk students, many times isloated from their peers. Throughout the next few school years, it is anticipated that the evaluation results for the bilingual education teachers on the Texas Teacher Appraisal System should increase as the effective teaching practices are applied. In the restructuring effort, it is hoped that these bilingual teachers will utilize their skills in assertive communication, reflection on instructional issues, and others gained in this project to model teacher professionalism for others and to take on the new expanded leadership roles for teachers as real decisionmakers at the campus and district levels. As San Marcos C.I.S.D. continues its ambitious restructuring program, the contribution of this project to the overall vision of the district, as well as the important place of the bilingual education staff in achieving it, should prove to be valuable.

## REFERENCES

Garmston, R. J. (1987). How administrators support peer coaching. *Educational Leadership, 44* (6), 18-26.

Showers, B., Joyce, B., & Bennett, B. (1987). Synthesis of research on staff development: A framework for future study and a state-of-the-art analysis. *Educational Leadership, 45* (3), 77-88.

Sparks, G. M. (1983). Synthesis of research on staff development for effective teaching. *Educational Leadership, 41* (3), 65-72.